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II.—THE ENGLISH WAGNER BOOK OF 1594.

The Faust legend is the Hydra of literature. One of its heads pops up in the story of Simon Magus, its body reaches from New Testament times to the days of Goethe, while a new head has just sprouted in Stephen Philips's latest drama. The Faust story has all the ear-marks of a legend endowed with eternal youth. More than three hundred years ago the most popular tragedy on the London stage was Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, while the play which is creating the greatest interest to-day on our American stage is a modern treatment of the Faust legend under the title of *Der Teufel*. So much for the absorbing interest which the story has (and ever will have) in its dramatic form.

For the time being, however, the present writer would like to dodge the swaying head of this literary dragon which has recently darted forth into the glare of the footlights, and direct the reader's attention to another side of this literary "Erscheinung," namely the folk-literature upon the subject as we find it in the sixteenth century.

English literature in the sixteenth century contains the Faust legend in the little quarto which Marlowe used, called the English Faust Book of 1592. In spite of the fact that the text contains many passages which are not in the German Faust book of 1587, from which it was translated, the English Faust Book is of no special literary importance. The only passage of immediate interest to us is that which contains the description of Rome, and even that chapter is of value only in so far as it touches upon the question of the date of the Faust book and that of Marlowe's drama. On the other hand, the sequel to the

English Faust Book, the English Wagner Book of 1594, possesses a certain literary character which is well worth our attention. The English Wagner Book of 1594 (registered on November 16, 1593, just five months after the death of Marlowe) was written by an Oxford graduate and a man of letters. He appears to have been a gentleman who was widely read, not only in the classics but also in other fields of literature. His quotations from John Wier, his reference to the famous economist Jean Bodin, and his intimate acquaintance and imitation of Reginald Scot's *Discouerie of Witchcraft* mark him as a student of witchcraft and its literature, that subject which was so vitally interesting to all classes in the last decade of the sixteenth century, especially in England. Again, this writer was a traveller, to some extent, having spent considerable time in Germany. He may also have been in Austria, for he gives us a detailed description of that country and he draws very largely upon its history for the subject matter of the latter part of the English Wagner Book. London he knows by heart and is proud of her. The Thames, Westminster, St. Margaret's Church, Mile-End green, the theatres—all these objects of interest he speaks of from first hand knowledge.

If the reader should carefully peruse the works of Tho. Nashe, particularly *Pierce Penilesse* and *The Unfortunate Traveller*, and should then read through the English Wagner Book, he could not fail to be impressed by the similarity of style and expression. When the present writer first examined the contents of the latter text, he was much inclined to believe that its author was Tho. Nashe, especially when he considered the following facts. Marlowe and Nashe were not only friends but also collaborators. Thomas Orwin was the printer of the

English Faust Book in 1592, and his widow was the printer of Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* in 1594. Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse* was printed by Abel Jeffes in 1592. Abel Jeffes printed the English Wagner Book in 1594. Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveller* was printed for Cuthbert Burby in 1594, and the English Wagner Book was printed for the same publisher in the same year. Of course these facts do not prove anything, but they are at least significant. In Nashe's *Strange Newes of the Intercepting certaine Letters*, printed in 1592, there occurs the phrase (quoted from Harvey) "his Margine is as deeplie learnt as *Fauste* praecor gelida." This quotation is of special interest in connection with the date of the English Faust Book and that of Marlowe's drama. In Nashe's *Lenten Stiffe* (1599) appears the use of the word "ringol or ringed circle," the earliest use of which is found in the English Wagner Book of 1594. The writings of Nashe are full of quotations from the classics: the author of the English Wagner Book also quotes from Epictetus, Plato, Vergil, Horace, Ovid, Origen, Tertullian, from the *Gesta Romanorum*, and from a fifteenth century ecclesiastical work in Latin. The splendid defence of the theatre as found in *Pierce Penilesse* would have delighted the heart of the author of the English Wagner Book, for the latter was not only an admirer of the histrionic art, but he was also a very close observer of the technique of the stage. The prevailing tone of the English Wagner Book is dramatic in quality. Faust and Wagner are described as though they were right up on the stage and the author were sitting in the front row. Note the life in this description:¹ "At the conclusion of his speech *Fa.*

¹ *The English Wagner Book of 1594*, edited by A. E. Richards (*Literarhistorische Forschungen*, vol. 35, 1907), page 54.

turnd his head aside laying it betwixt his hands hiding it, so sat a great while. *Ake.* he friskt vp and down for he had neither clog nor chain, because he was in the number of the wild ones, and ouer the table and backe again. *Ak.* was the familiar which *F.* gave to *W.* who asked him in the fashion of an Ape. Such cranks, such lifts, careers and gambalds, as he plaid there, woulde haue made a horse laugh. *Meph.*, who as it semed was the speaker of ye Parliament in hel, rose & walked about very hastily, at length he came to the table, and striking his fist on it (the print was seene 2 yeare after, and was carried to *S. Margets* church for a relique, to shew what a hot fellow the diuell is in his anger) and again beating said, thou, and then left, and came and went, & came and went again, here he takes me one booke and hurls it against a Cupboorde, and then he takes the Cupboord and hurls it against the wall and then he takes the wall and throwes it against the house, and the house out at the Window." There is plenty of dramatic action there, surely.

The most important passage in this text in connection with the theater is the detailed description of the stage hell mouth,¹ which has already been commented² upon by the present writer. That description alone entitles the English Wagner Book to more consideration than it has hitherto received. *A propos* of a recent article by Mr. William Archer, in the *Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft*, vol. 44, it is interesting to note that in the English Wagner Book³ the tiring house is evidently regarded as being an integral part of the frame of the

¹ Pages 67 ff.

² *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. xxi, 4.

³ Page 68.

theater. The passage reads: "There might you see to be short the Gibbet, the Posts, the Ladders, the tiring house, there euery thing which in the like houses either vse or necessity makes common." The reader will recollect the frequent mention of the famous actor Tarlton in the works of Tho. Nashe. In the English Wagner Book he is referred to in the following passage:¹ ". . . there at the Citty gate he drew out a long taber and a pipe and strikt vp such a merry note, as the foolish ornament of all London stages neuer could come neere him, no not when he wakte the writer of the newes out of Purgatory, with the shrill noise." (Tarlton's *Newes out of Purgatorie* was entered in the Stationer's Register on June 26, 1590, and in the same year an answer to it was printed with the title *The Cobler of Caunterie*, etc.). It is the opinion of the present writer that the description of the "right marvailous triumph" in the first chapter of the English Wagner Book was inspired by a similar passage in the English Faust Book; but both may have been influenced by Tarlton's *Seven Deadly Sinnen*.

The influence of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* is plainly seen in the direct quotation in Italian of four lines from that epic,² and also in the whole description of the magic castle to which the Wittenberg doctor goes in order to obtain the water of Oblivion.³ (It is to be remembered that a folio edition of the great Italian epic was printed in F glish in 1590). The sonnet which follows the lines from Ariosto's poem may be a translation from some unknown Italian or French source, or it may be entirely original. Its identity is unknown to the present writer. It has recently been shown⁴ that the influence of the

¹ Page 94.

² Pages 77, 78.

³ Pages 72 ff.

⁴ *French Influence in English Literature*, Upham, New York, 1908.

French sonnet upon that of England in the latter half of the sixteenth century was almost as great as that of the Italian sonnet; but in view of the fact that there is no evidence elsewhere of the knowledge of French on the part of the author of our text, it is hardly probable that the source of his English poem is to be found in French literature.

Another point of literary interest is the reference in the English Wagner Book to Rabelais's *Gargantua*.¹ The passage reads as follows: ". . . his courser so firme, nimble ioynted, tall and large, such a one as might haue beene the son of Gargantuas mare." On April 6, 1592, there was entered in the Stationer's Register *Gargantua his prophesie*, and on June 16, 1592, there is the entry *Gargantua*, and on December 4, 1594 (the year of the publication of our text), there was entered *The Historie of Gargantua*. As these publications have not survived and as nothing whatever is known about them, this reference to Rabelais's work is of special interest, for it tends to show that there was an early translation into English of Rabelais between the years 1592 and 1594. Bearing in mind what has been said in regard to the similarity in style between the author of the English Wagner Book and Tho. Nashe, it is proper to recall the fact that the two English writers who were most influenced by Rabelais were Shakespere and Tho. Nashe. So far as is known to the present writer, no one has ever attempted to elucidate the following passages in the English Wagner Book.

1. "There chaunced certaine Schollers . . . to walke abroad to a little village within foure English mile . . . of Wittenberg called Shaftsbury." (Page 40.)

¹ Page 99.

2. "Wherewith the Italian mocks them saying:

Germani multos possunt tolerare labores,
O vtinam possint tam bene ferre sitim.

Unjo which they merrely aunswere:

Vt nos dur_a sitis, sic vos Venus improba vexat,
Lex lata est Veneri Iulia, nulla mero." (Page 40.)

3. "So long they druncke,—fetching ouer the *Green nine Muses*," etc. (Page 41.)

4. ". . . With whom when they haue daunced a great while (after some odde tune, as after that which they call *Robinsons delight*, but more truly a iest, though somewhat tolerable)," etc. (Page 41.)

5. "This was the bataile which was fought for the greatt Realme of Asia, by *Hercules* and *Orontides*, where Orontides was slaine, and *Hercules* sore wounded," etc. (Page 57.)

6. ". . . Nor is it more blasphemous to be spoake to vs men, then to God himselfe, as it is in *S. Alathero*, where the diuell was not afeard to assayle his creatour with most terrible argumentes of the diuine letter." (Page 59.)

7. "His father dwelt at Malmesburg a town hard by Wittenberg in Saxony in high Dutchland," etc. (Page 75.)

8. "A mio solemente amandona
Madonna: Donna non parelia." (Page 77.)

9. "Then he shewed them this Epigram, which he made when as before the Duke his Father, a brace of faire English Grey hounds fell down at the Harts heels starke dead, (the Hart also lying not aboue sixe yards off dead to with chasing hauing out stript the rest of the dogs aboue halfe a mile. (Page 78.)

10. "*Mephostophiles* he tearmed *Mamri*," etc. (Page 90.)

11. ". . . And the horse following the Elephant, as you might see *Seignior Prospero* lead the way in *Mile end Greene* in the ringles," etc. (Page 105.)

The above passages are complete enigmas to the present writer. Any light which may be thrown upon them by readers of this article would be of much value to the editor of the English text.

Finally, there are several words and phrases in the

English Wagner Book which are of some interest to lexicographers. They are the following:

1. Page 44, "slomy." This seems to be the only known instance of the word used in the sense of dark, grimy.
2. Page 48, "excircled." This word is not found in the *New English Dictionary*.
3. Page 50, "like Carthorses." The citation in the *New English Dictionary* illustrating the use of this simile is of nineteenth century date.
4. Page 54, "enough to make a horse laugh." Professor Murray informs me that this instance of the phrase is the earliest known to him.
5. Page 60, "circumstantiue." This word is illustrated in the *New English Dictionary* by a quotation from a work printed as late as 1866!
6. Page 64, "fewter." Much discussion over the meaning of this word has taken place in *Mod. Lang Notes*,¹ but the significance it possesses in the English Wagner Book has not been noted.
7. Page 68, "Epitome." The citation in the *New English Dictionary* is from a work printed thirteen years later than our text.
8. Page 81, "Hannikins." The word may be an anglicized form of *Hänschen*. On the other hand it may (in view of the context and the reference to "Hackney" in the preceding lines) be derived from the term *Hannaken*, a Czechic tribe who were noted for their handsome breed of horses. Compare the use of the word in the modern German story by Ebner-Eschenbach, *Die Freiherren von Gemperlein*, chapter 6.
9. Page 96, "lineamented." This word does not appear in any dictionary.

Taking it all in all, the English Wagner Book of 1594 seems to possess a literary character of considerable interest to lovers of folk literature.

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¹ See *M. L. N.*, February, 1904.